

Wedding portraits

Dave Brown is a professional wedding photographer. Here, he shares his tips on getting wedding portraits right



"I use natural, contemporary images to create a beautiful, evocative storybook to vividly capture the atmosphere and emotions of any wedding day that I shoot. I believe that a great relationship between the couple and the photographer is very important to the creation of the pictures as well as their enjoyment of the day, so I always take care to find out exactly what they want."

David Brown Photography is currently recommended by two of the UK's top wedding venues – Wilton House in southern England and Knowsley Hall in the north west – and Brown regularly has many of his photographs featured in local and national publications.

Here, Brown reveals the secrets of some of his most impressive wedding portraits. Often working in less-than-ideal conditions, Brown is an expert when it comes to making the best out of any situation, as his photographs clearly demonstrate.

"I shoot in RAW format and convert my images using Adobe Bridge. I switch off all the auto settings and adjust the exposure and colour temperature manually. The beauty of RAW is the ability to make the same adjustments across large numbers of images very quickly and be able to see the results straight away without any loss of image quality. I then convert to PSD format where I add contrast and only then convert to JPEG. If there is one shot I'm most proud of it's a portrait I took in Austria (below left). If I'm shooting away from home I always arrive

a day early and look around the area for the best locations. Unlike landscape photography where patience will (almost) always reward the photographer with great lighting, time is strictly limited at a wedding and couples will not usually want to spend long away from their guests for photography. If the actual wedding venue offers limited possibilities, then having a place in mind that I've already researched gives us the best chance of creating a memorable image. On this occasion, the weather was on our side and I was able to get this shot just as the sunlight streamed through a gap in the clouds creating perfect backlighting.

Because time is of the essence at weddings, I try to keep equipment requirements to a minimum, using natural light wherever possible. I look for surfaces that will add texture to a photograph and for this there is nothing that beats ancient stonework. For the shot *Venus* (below right), I created the vignetting in Photoshop, using the Lasso tool to very roughly draw around the bride, then selected the inverse and feathered the edge of my selection by 200 pixels. Having created my selection, I then used levels to darken the outer edges of the image, emphasising the bride and enhancing all the beautiful detail and variation in the stonework.

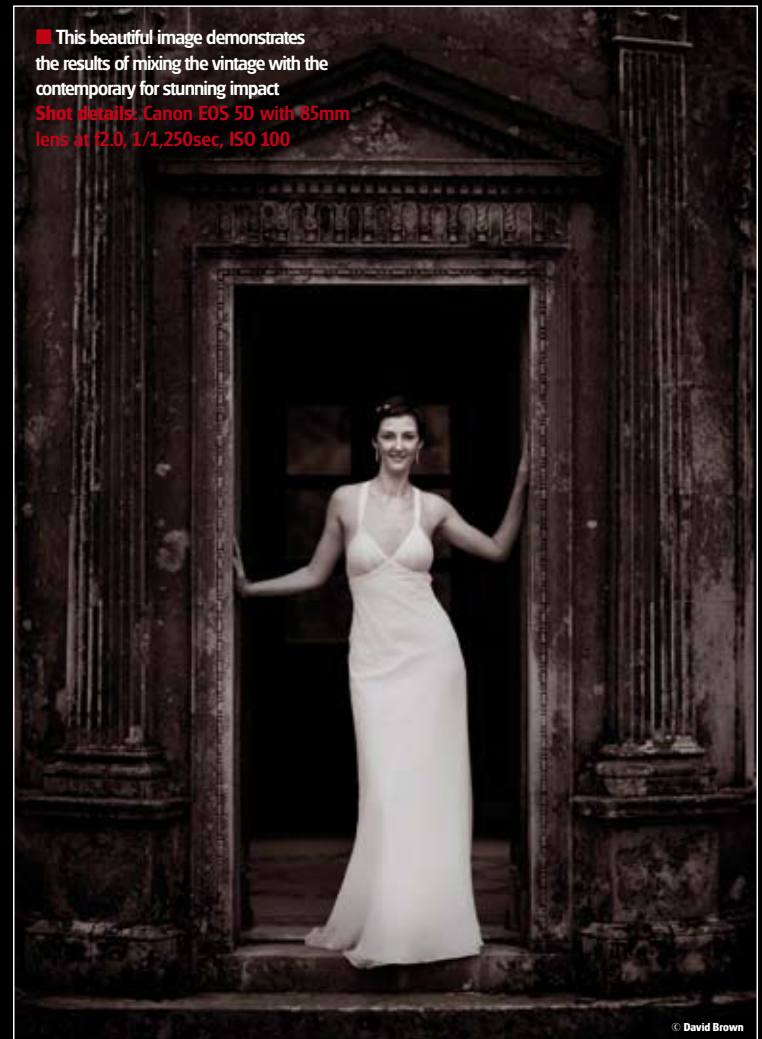
Despite the fervent wishes of the bride, not all couples can arrange blazing sunshine for their wedding day. But what may seem like less than perfect conditions can be used to your advantage. I like to create a sense of movement and flow in my images, and a windy day is the perfect time to do that."

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■ Taken in Austria, the way in which Brown has captured this shaft of light illuminating the happy couple is exquisite
Shot details: Canon EOS 5D with 70mm lens at f5.6, 1/1,250sec, ISO 400



■ This beautiful image demonstrates the results of mixing the vintage with the contemporary for stunning impact
Shot details: Canon EOS 5D with 85mm lens at f2.0, 1/1,250sec, ISO 100

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